[Carta a Michael Duffy, Minister of Commu

ACET

Australian Coalition for East Timor

c- PO Box 913,
Darwin NT 5794
June 6, 1985

Mr Michael Duffy MHR
Minister for Communications
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Mr Duffy,

I hereby apply for a radio transmitter operator's licence and for a radio receiver licence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905-1973 and, if and when applicable, under the Radiocommunications Act (1983).

I make my application on behalf of the Australian Coalition for East Timor (ACET) which unites all East Timor support committees in Australia. I am applying for the licences to allow radio communications to take place between myself and ACET from Darwin and the Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (RCNR)/Fretilin who are fighting a war for independence in the mountains of East Timor.

We apply for a frequency for use for one hour and a half a day for up to three days a week. We expect that in most weeks the radio contact will last for one hour or less for one day.

We note that the Radio Communications Act (1983) , section 24 (2) outlines the considerations that you, as Minister, must consider in granting licences. I believe this application fulfils all these criteria. In particular, we note that sub-section 24 (2) (b) requires the Minister to decide "the extent (if any) to which the purpose of the operation of the transmitters specified by the applicant is a purpose that could reasonably, in all circumstances, be effected by a means other than the proposed operation of the transmitters".

Given that the RCNR/Fretilin is fighting a guerrilla war in the mountains of East Timor, it is of course impossible for them to contact Australia by normal telecommunications means. This contact can only be made by means of the radio transceiver they have obtained.

The radio operation will consist of messages being exchanged in Portuguese and English between Darwin and East Timor. No coded information will be sent. I will make the radio available to journalists, politicians, United Nations representatives, representatives of the Portuguese government, aid organisations, Amnesty International and any other persons who have a legitimate desire to be informed about the situation in East Timor and the views of the RCNR/Fretilin on any matter ,including their proposals for a peaceful solution to the present conflict.

As you will be aware, the Indonesian authorities since their invasion of East Timor on December 7, 1975 have placed a blockade around that country and refused entry to independent observers who could have free access to speak and observe the situation.

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Australian Coalition for East Timor

Only a few journalists and diplomats have been allowed into the country for short, guided tours .

Because journalists and other independent observers are unable to gain free access to East Timor, the radio contact will allow them at least to obtain the Fretilin resistance's view of the situation. The Indonesian government viewpoint is naturally freely available through their embassies and consulates in Australia.

As you will be aware, the United Nations Secretary-General, under a mandate from the UN General Assembly, is currently actively seeking a negotiated settlement to the Timor dispute. The radio link from Darwin would allow him or his representatives to seek the views of the Fretilin leadership inside East Timor on a peaceful solution. Similarly, the Portuguese government , representing the "administrative power" recognised by the United Nations, could also be interested in direct radio contact with the Fretilin resistance, to seek their views on a peaceful settlement. We would also be willing to allow a representative of the government of Indonesia, as a party to the current negotiations, to speak directly to Fretilin leaders by the radio link.

We note recent comments by Foreign Minister Bill Hayden to the effect that he, doubted whether Fretilin leaders were in fact broadcasting from inside East Timor and ,second, that he believed their allegations of Indonesian atrocities were "grossly exaggerated".

While ACET strongly contests these statements, it draws your attention to the fact that they are irrelevant to the granting of a radio licence. Any denial of a licence on the grounds that the information received is "exaggerated" or that a Minister doubts its source, would amount to political censorship. It is up to journalists and others, and the world public opinion to make such decisions.

Finally, we draw your attention to ALP national conference decisions while the ALP was in opposition which called for a radio link between Darwin and East Timor to be licensed. We believe that ALP and indeed public opinion in Australia still strongly believes that such a radio licence should be grante

We look forward to a positive decision on your par

Yours faithfully,

Brian Manning